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## DEPARTMENT OF RED CROSS NURSING

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It was with many regrets that Miss Hay and I turned our backs upon Poland on October 27. We were leaving many of our nurses, busy it is true, but facing the winter which was bound to be long and cold, and while the Red Cross could give them many comforts, which the inhabitants could not procure, it would be none the less harrowing for them, for they would be obliged to see the keener suffering of the people under these conditions. While they were doing all they could to soften and mitigate the hardships for those they were working with, they could not provide fuel, shelter, food and warm clothing in sufficient abundance to take off the keen edge of suffering. There seemed no end to the suffering and even the best that one could do was but a drop in the bucket.

We arrived in Vienna on the 29th, at about 2 o'clock in the morning, after one of the coldest journeys that I have ever taken, as there was no heat in the train. Although we had wired ahead, we did not know whether we would be met by a representative from the Red Cross or not, so we got down from the train a bit anxious, fearing that we might be obliged to spend the remainder of the night in the station, but there on the platform was a man in the well known uniform of the Red Cross waiting for us with a trusty little "Ford" outside. We were taken to a hotel, the best that could be procured for us at that time, but one of the most depressing places I have ever entered, although we were both so tired that we slept, buried under feather beds, in spite of our surroundings. Upon waking, which was rather late, great clouds of smoke filled the room. At first we thought perhaps the hotel was on fire, but we noticed, however, that everything was covered with deep black soot and cinders. Upon investigation we found that the chimney sweep was at work and, as our classic porcelain stove had no door, the dust and soot were all coming out into the room. Stuffing the open door full of newspapers, we started, with the aid of the maid, to repair the damage, which after all was more easily accomplished than we at first thought. We had no Red Cross nurses at Vienna, but we had a unit that was distributing supplies and assisting in such ways as seemed indicated through existing agencies. It would be hard to describe this city at present; once the gayest capital in Europe, and certainly one of the most beautiful, it seems to be a city without hope. It would be impossible to tell in a few words the conditions that have led to this

situation. Indeed, they are too well known to require explanation. The present lack of food, with systematic under-feeding since 1918, the lack of fuel and raw materials, and the depreciation of the currency, are all factors which have brought this once proud country to its present position of hopelessness. The condition of the Austrian nurses is particularly pathetic. There are plenty of nurses in Austria, although they may not have been prepared according to the ideas and standards which we maintain in this country, but still they are meeting the needs of the country. The hospitals are crowded with patients, for they are about the brightest spot, after all, in Austria, for there they find warmth and food, such as it is, and care. The nurses themselves frequently accept positions in the hospital, in order that they may get three meals a day and a place to live. Perhaps the conditions could best be understood by reading the following summary of a report of Dr. Lyon, who is Medical Director of the Red Cross Relief Unit in Austria:

Policy of Unit to concentrate upon feeding children \* \* \* some help should be extended to doctors and nurses in the hospitals, particularly nurses. They receive an income (God save the mark), board and lodging. This income is exceedingly small. For example,—the Lucina, a Maternity Hospital, pays as a monthly wage the munificent sum of 70 kronans. At the present exchange this amounts to less than 20 cents per month. With the prevailing prices the entire wage for at least ten months is required to purchase one pair of shoes of the poorest quality. As already stated, these nurses are fed by the hospital, but with the small ration obtainable and the general poor quality of the food, the nurse can never work at her highest efficiency nor can she expect to successfully combat the many infections to which she is daily exposed. The great number of consumptive nurses and the high mortality among hospital personnel in Vienna is the most striking proof of this statement. To the nurses of this country who are struggling for higher salaries, (and we frequently hear of rates of \$8.00 per day for private nurses), a contrast is presented that requires no comment. The strengthening of local organizations by intelligent assistance seems the wisest form of service that the American Red Cross can render in this country. Vienna with its enormous hospitals of all characters, its dispensaries and clinics, its orphanages and day nurseries, seems to need neither doctors nor nurses, yet there are many other things which they do need and in many instances without the linen, the layettes, the clothing, that has been given by the Red Cross they would be entirely without these materials which are absolutely essential to the care of the sick. We hear pathetic stories of wrapping babies in newspapers in Austria,—perhaps this is true,—and we feel sure that it would be still truer if the Red Cross were not there to help. One could dwell upon the situation in Austria to any length, but it is almost too sad to discuss.

From Vienna we continued our journey to Belgrade. The Red Cross activities were being brought to a close at the time we reached the Serbian capital, in fact, the office closed the next day. I was anxious, however, to stop in this historic city and get an impression of the field where so much work had been done by the American Red Cross and especially its nurses, dating back to 1914. Rhodie Whedon, an American Red Cross nurse, had decided to remain after the

withdrawal of the commission, and had accepted a position with the Serbian Government to supervise the Belgrade Orphanage. We had a most interesting visit to this institution and were greatly interested in the constructive policy that was being adopted at that place. General Rasnitch, President of the Society for the Protection of Yugo-Slav Children, assured us of his keen appreciation of Miss Whedon's work. The little infirmary and dispensary which had been developed for the care of sick children were models of cleanliness and order, and the most cordial relations seemed to exist between all who were interested in the development of this institution. We also visited Dr. Reeder, who was in charge of the American Child Welfare Association for Serbia. This organization has replaced the old "Serbian Relief." There were said to be 200,000 war orphans in Serbia; 95,000 have been placed with relatives, 10,000 are in institutions, and the government has subsidized 40,000, i. e., they have paid families a given amount a month to take care of the children. There are about 50,000 left for whom no provision has been made. The American Child Welfare Association is working on this group. They, too, are placing the children in homes, but always with the understanding that they must be allowed to go to school. Visitors have been appointed to follow up the children, in order to see that this regulation is carried out. The care of so many orphans would naturally lead to the development of clinics of various sorts, and for these clinics, nurses have been required. Gradually the Red Cross has been returning nurses to this point to work with this organization. The last reports indicate that fourteen nurses have been sent down from Paris and a few more will be required.

#### MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON RED CROSS NURSING SERVICE

A meeting of the National Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service was held at National Headquarters, on April 22 and 23. Miss Noyes, chairman, presided. Conferences were also held by the Division Managers and Division Directors of Nursing throughout the week beginning April 18. This made it possible to hold joint meetings of these two groups with the National Committee. Reports were read by the Directors of the Red Cross Public Health Service, Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick, Nutrition Service, and by the Assistant to the Director, Ida F. Butler, on Enrollment, Assignment and Service to the United States Public Health Service Hospitals.

The Chairman gave a report on her trip to Europe, speaking at some length on the character and type of work being done by members of the Red Cross Nursing Service. Reports on the Student Nurse Recruiting Movement, Headquarters National Nursing Associations, the Convalescent House at Bay Shore, Hospitalization and Compensation for Disabled Nurses, and the Delano Memorial, were read.

Resolutions were presented on the death of Sophia F. Palmer expressing the gratitude and appreciation of the Committee for her years of successful endeavor as Editor-in-Chief of the **AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING**, and for her valuable and long continued assistance in the development of the Nursing Service of the American Red

Cross, not only as a member of the Nursing Service, but as a worker in the local Red Cross activities.

#### MARY S. GARDNER TO STUDY CHILD WELFARE UNITS

With the development of Child Welfare Units in Europe, it has seemed important to the Nursing Service of the American Red Cross that a very careful study should be made of the relation of the Public Health Nurses of these units. For that reason Mary S. Gardner, superintendent of the Providence District Nurses' Association, has been asked to assume this responsibility. She will probably visit Czecho-Slovakia, Poland and Serbia for this purpose. We have about seventy nurses in Europe at the present time. It is not expected to increase the number of nurses very materially, as it is plainly evident that the American Red Cross cannot continue to nurse Europe indefinitely, any more than it can feed or clothe those countries, but it can do a great deal towards the development of local initiative, the instruction of local groups, and assistance in establishing schools of nursing. The relation of the nurse to the Child Welfare Units should be carefully studied and developed in order that the smallest number of nurses may gain the largest return or secure the maximum of accomplishment. Miss Gardner will probably remain three or four months and, with Miss Hay, work out a general policy. Conditions, however, vary so greatly that no plan can be developed which will be universally applicable, each group while guided by certain general policies will develop in accordance with its environment.

#### A CORRECTION

In the March Journal, page 392, last paragraph, the words should be: "we urge the nurses *not* to apply for inclusion in the group of social service workers." The reference was to the Child Welfare Units abroad.

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#### TOO LATE FOR CLASSIFICATION

THE VIRGINIA STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS OF NURSES will hold semi-annual examinations for Registration, June 29, 30 and July 1, 1921. For information address Miss Ethel Smith, Secretary-Treasurer, Craigsville, Virginia.